

BERING STRAIT DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
Denali Commission Progress Report
OCTOBER 1, 2020 – DECEMBER 30, 2020
AWARD # 1582

ARDOR ANNUAL REPORT

The BSDC staff worked with the State of Alaska to complete our Annual Report for the legislature and provided updated information for their website.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPER RESPONSE TEAM

Kawerak's Economic Development Specialist (EDS) continues to participate with the Economic Developer Response Team with other economic professionals. UACED hosts bi-weekly Zoom meeting since March. This group is instrumental in sharing new COVID information, state and federal legislation, concerns, solutions and impacts on businesses. This group continues to be beneficial as we each share additional resources and examples of what each area is doing to get the most benefit for small businesses.

BUSINESS IMPACT/ARTIST SURVEYS

The BSDC, collected two separate Business Impact Surveys in the region and compiled and shared those results to other economic development organizations, SOA Commissioners and members of the Legislature. A second Artist & Culture Survey & Resilience Fund survey has been developed to assist us to better understand how COVID-19 is affecting culture bearers and artists in the Bering Strait region and has just been released. We recognize that the situation continues to change rapidly but plan to use the responses to this survey to inform and support advocacy efforts. We will share information or trends that may be helpful to other agencies once the results have been compiled.

AK CARES/COMMISSIONER WEEKLY ZOOM MEETINGS

ARDOR staff continues to attend these meetings and provide information, suggestions and solutions as the AK CARES program moved forward during this reporting period. We continue to utilize this opportunity to represent Kawerak/Bering Strait Development Council.

COVID ASSISTANCE/TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The BSDC has continued to work with those 100's of regional businesses within the Bering Strait region. Additional informational materials representing changes that were made for available funding was directed to those businesses in our data base. Kawerak's website continues to post and update all COVID funding resource and eligibility information. The Kawerak Business Development Specialist has been the staff lead in making individual contact with known business owners/corporations, assisted by the ARDOR staff person to provide current information. All regional businesses have been contacted and provided with additional notifications of resources, assistance opportunities, webinars, etc. via many outlets.

The Community Planning & Development and ARDOR staff persons continued to partner with the Nome Chamber of Commerce to share available Small Business Relief resources and additional information learned from the Economic Developer's Response Team, SOA teleconferences/Zoom meetings and other resources.

We have been successful in responding to a magnitude of incoming calls, emails, etc. asking for assistance or clarifications of requirements and application assistance. Staff has provided this assistance or provided them alternate resources to contact.

Staff completed two Business Impact Surveys as well as a survey specific to artists, with another survey just being distributed in January. Surveys completed have been compiled and reports shared with other ARDORs, as well as the information used for forward strategic planning.

Kawerak/Bering Strait Development Council coordinated events for Alaska Start-Up Week. This was the first year we were coordinating events in the Bering Strait region where entrepreneurs, local leaders, and friends from the region were invited to come together during one week to build momentum around Alaska's entrepreneurial opportunities. Those interested completed a form and shared photos of their business setting and we shared these profiles on our social media outlets for exposure and to encourage more local entrepreneurs.

The BSDC also collaborated with the Alaska Small Business Development Center (AKSBDC) to offer a free online workshop: Starting a Business? We can help! The workshop was held November 19 at 12 noon with no fees to participate. Registration was publicized and forms were sent to the BDS at Kawerak.

Kawerak is a long-time supporter of Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation's (NSEDCC) Small Business Initiative (SBI) program and we are providing promotion, application and technical assistance to persons within the region applying. The SBI is an avenue for individuals to promote and develop business ventures in an effort to help alleviate social and economic issues facing the region and is a priority within our CEDS. The grant program is aimed at identifying and funding business ideas that will stimulate and facilitate economic development.

Staff have partnered with SBA, AKSBDC and SBDC to offer a Zoom information meeting for PPP/EIDL programs for Round 2. See below advertisement that is being promoted to businesses from our regional data base.



   

Join us via Zoom!

PPP ROUND 2

Overview and Q&A

An update on the Economic Aid to Hard-Hit Small Businesses, Nonprofits, and Venues Act. A great opportunity to ask questions regarding the PPP/EIDL Programs.

Speakers:
Clark Bihag, SBA's Alaska Area Manager
Jennifer Adams, AKSBDC Rural Business Advisor

FEBRUARY 19 • 12- 1 PM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85971781257>
Meeting ID: 859 7178 1257 Passcode: 927866
Or call: +1 669 900 6833

Questions? 304-1154 or abioff@kawerak.org

Our Business Development Specialist, also an Alaska State Council on the Arts trustee assisted in promoting their Adaption and Innovation Grant Program to assist and support artists on a statewide level in response to COVID-19. This grant program is supporting arts activities in Alaska during a time of great change, via response to community need, and creativity. The Alaska State Council on the Arts, with support from Rasmuson Foundation developed this program as a means for Alaskan organizations, individuals, and agencies to adapt and innovate practice and operations with reduced risk, across this time of instability. The purpose of this granting strategy is to support efforts to rebuild and advance our work together, to connect with the community, and to positively impact Alaskan lives across the state in and through the arts and cultures of our state. Our staff promoted this program through many channels we had available for outreach.

Our Tribal Affairs program continues to work with Tribal 25 and all our communities on many facets of this process. Each village in the Bering Strait region successfully submitted an application. Kawerak/BSDC will continue to work with Denali Commission, our tribes, Tribal 25 and others to assist with efforts needed to improve the internet connectivity within the Bering Strait region.

BSDC staff are continuing work with McDowell Group to provide further research, and will contract with an expert on tourism planning to facilitate multiple community leader/member meetings as COVID travel restrictions lessen. This will include Nome tribes and two outlying villages with a form of tourism listed as a priority project in their Local Economic Development Plans (LEDPs). These meetings will identify and initiate successful individual community planning models, including community organization's leader/member responsibilities, timeframes, goals, funding resources, etc. that could then be utilized as guides for additional communities interested in promoting tourism. Funds from an alternate funding source – Moore Foundation – have been approved to complete the necessary travel and community meetings in Spring/Summer of 2021.

Staff shared tools and resources made available through the Manufacturing Extension Program (MEP) with the Tribal, Municipal, Corporate and small business owners in the region. Also distributed was information on the MEP E-Commerce assistance workshop.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING - Kawerak/Bering Strait Development Council was awarded a grant in the amount of \$83,333 from the State of Alaska. These funds were utilized per our grant agreement to enhance our efforts to provide regional experience in economic development to businesses, including providing information about funding opportunities, technical support and providing resources.

Kawerak was awarded an additional grant in the amount of \$5,000 from ***First People's Fund*** for us to distribute to persons in the region as we recognize our artists are grappling with difficulty accessing markets and general life disruptions have led to supplemental income losses. An Artist & Culture Survey & Resilience Fund survey have been developed to assist us to better understand how COVID-19 is affecting culture bearers and artists in the Bering Strait region. We recognize that the situation continues to change rapidly but plan to use the responses to this survey to inform and support advocacy efforts. We will share information or trends that may be helpful to other agencies.

After completing the survey, our regional artists will be eligible to apply for up to \$500 in relief funds to compensate for lost income. Depending on demand and availability of funds, not all applicants may receive funds. The Resilience Fund we are offering is restricted to residents of the region with a deadline to apply of Noon on Friday, January 29, 2021.

Funds will be dispersed via direct deposit but we can also consider alternate payment methods for those that might not be available to them.

This survey is an extension of a more specific feedback survey previously completed on the importance of the economic, cultural and social role of the arts in their lives and we will be utilizing both reports for moving forward strategic planning.

Kawerak also receives a 3-year EDA Planning Grant (\$75,000/year) with a scope of work that enhances CEDS priorities and partially includes:

- Assist in the preparation of updating comprehensive local economic development.
- Work with other agencies to promote an industry cluster need in the region.
- Participate in working groups comprised of regional and state-level organizations to assist with preparation of hazard mitigation, small community emergency response and other comprehensive plans for our region's communities.
- Identify new projects and continue working with existing partners for successful implementation of sustainable community priority projects and employment opportunities
- Kawerak will plan and partner with the Small Business Administration, Northwest Campus and others to deliver training webinars and face to face classes/workshops to support business development and expansion to potential, new and existing business owners. Two trainings will be held.
- Provide specific technical support to regional development coordinators for planning and implementing priority projects in our Bering Strait communities, including technical grant writing assistance and application review.

Kawerak's Community Planning & Development, which is the program the ARDOR is within, received \$108,000 from the Moore Foundation. These funds are being used to fully identify existing gaps for job and tourism related business creation, potential environmental and natural resource impacts, competitiveness, natural, historic and cultural attractions, sustainability and economic cost benefit analysis.

Kawerak/CPD was also awarded a Supplemental Economic Development Administration (EDA) \$150,000 grant to develop a regional resilience and retention plan in response to the pandemic. This plan will become a part of the overall CEDS. Specific stages of planning are ongoing over two years and will include: 1) travel to 16 communities to conduct small business outreach, 2) provide one-on-one technical assistance and 3) conduct five artist professional development workshops. Additional project goals referenced in our newest CEDS will be to strengthen our economy in ways that preserve and enhance our quality of life while ensuring our environment is not harmed, to include 1) educating and training at least 144 regional residents for employment in growing industries, 2) support entrepreneurship and provide business planning and research assistance, and 3) at least 32 people will receive direct one-on-one technical assistance.

GRANT BUDGET MODIFICATION - Kawerak/BSDC submitted a budget modification to Denali Commission that was approved for us to move unspent travel funds to program supplies and short-term contracts. A budget modification was also approved from our SOA COVID Relief grant, moving travel funds to short term contracts. These two budget modifications have provided Kawerak/BSNC with the needed 20k (10k SOA/10k Denali) to develop a Business Directory and Resource Center website for the region with an overall goal to improve networking and resource sharing between organizations and businesses, leading to stronger and more vibrant economic landscapes within the Bering Strait region.

Kawerak/Bering Strait Development Council has contracted with Sundog, Inc. for development and we have established a planning team consisting of Kawerak staff, IT personnel, Nome Chamber of Commerce, Nome Convention & Visitors Bureau and regional small business owners. This project is in beginning stages and a draft website is being established. As we move forward, we will also be working with the Alaska Small Business Development Center and other local and state agencies. We have been in contact with a SOA GIS Analysts who is developing an interactive website relating to ARDOR activities and will have our new website resource listed.